

“Healthy Behaviors in Women and Families”

Health Resources & Services Administration

Dr. Consuelo Bonillas, PI



Health Resources & Services Administration has funded the Healthy Behaviors in Women and Families project. Dr. Consuelo Bonillas, Department of Physical Education, Recreation and Health at Kean University will serve as the project director. The project, entitled “Juntas: Creating Healthy New Beginnings Together”, will develop educational, social and lifestyle interventions that are culturally appropriate on helping 150 Hispanic obese/overweight women gain a healthy weight throughout the pregnancy. Also, during the 12-month postpartum period the participants will be offered support for gradual weight loss, breastfeeding and pregnancy spacing.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that gestational weight gain within a woman’s body mass index (BMI) category is associated with optimal birth weight and obstetric outcomes. Unfortunately, 40-70% of women in the United States gain more gestational weight than is recommended. Moreover, overweight and obese women are more likely to gain excessive weight during their pregnancy and are less likely to lose it after delivery. Even though an estimated 33% of women in the United States are classified as obese, 55% of Hispanic women are believed to have a body mass index (BMI) of 30 or more.

By encouraging healthy behaviors such as healthy eating, physical activity, breastfeeding, and stress-management skills during pregnancy and postpartum with Hispanic obese/overweight women, this program will provide a more efficient and effective delivery of group-specific health interventions to help achieve the overarching goals of Healthy People 2020: (1) attain high quality, longer lives free of preventable disease, disability, injury, and premature death; (2) achieve health equity, eliminate disparities, and improve the health of all groups; (3) create social and physical environments that promote good health for all; and (4) promote quality of life, healthy development and healthy behaviors across all life stages.

In order to increase healthier eating and physical activity during the 2nd and 3rd trimester of pregnancy to prevent excessive gestational weight gain, the educational intervention will consist of five workshops that have been designed to increase the subjects’ knowledge and improve attitude towards prenatal nutrition, prenatal exercise, GDM and preventing type-2 diabetes, stress-management.

Kean University will collaborate with multiple organizations by providing training and technical assistance to ensure replication and implementation of the interventions provided to promote healthy gestational weight gain and gradual postpartum weight loss with fidelity.